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CEREBUS GUYS

no.11



211
OCT



CEREBUS

NO. 211

OCTOBER 1996

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a novel

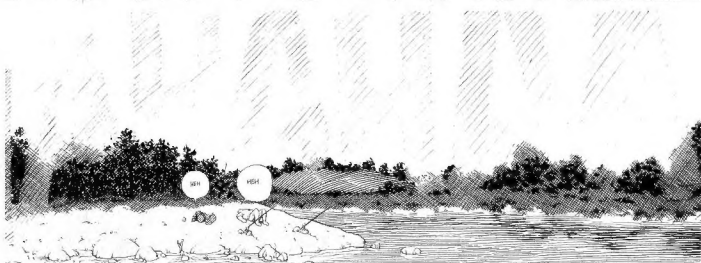
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(Cerebus 201
to Cerebus 219)

MONTHLY

ALL CONTENTS
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AND GERHARD

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ONTARIO





I PROJECT.

AISLE.

VOMITED.

AT THE

STAR. CHILD. TAVERN.

SO THEY REQUESTED
THAT I SPEND THE
REST
OF THE DAY --
... OVER ...

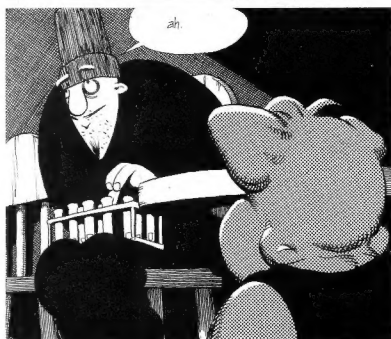
...WhereAS
the moisture
I've collected
from between
my thigh and
buttock
(as you
can see)
disclosure
more
quickly
...

'eez foot
me off mae
STOWWT...

* HERE ...

Oooooo--
"LOOOKY
USS"
AYE?





Then perhaps
I'll **wait** a bit
before discussing
my **saliva**
samples

OOCHHHH!!
Ken ye naugh'
DYEW sum'ins
abow 'THAT
BLOKE!?

"GENTLY
BENT"

mmmm?

STOP BOTHERIN'
TH' COOSTANLINS,
AYE?

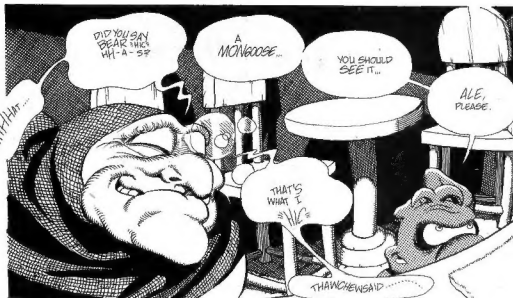
are you **ordering**
me to do disists?

LAT'S JOOST
SAY I'M
RUNQUASTIN'
THAT YOU
"DUHSEST."

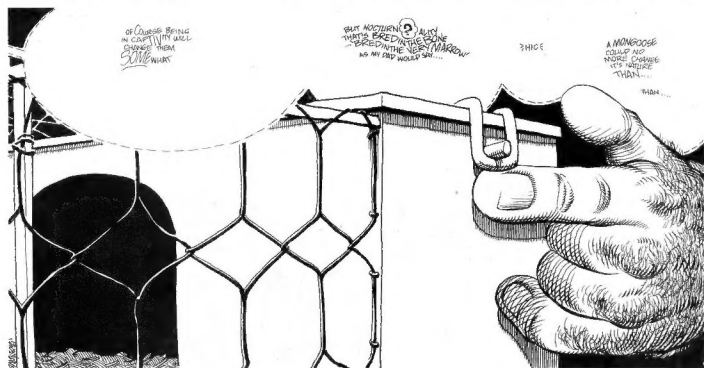
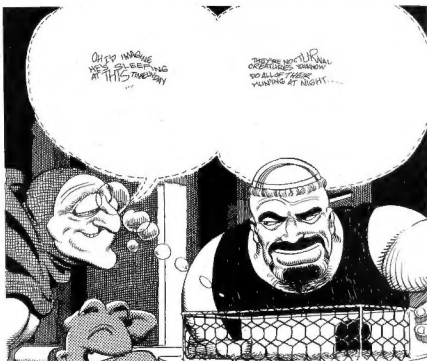
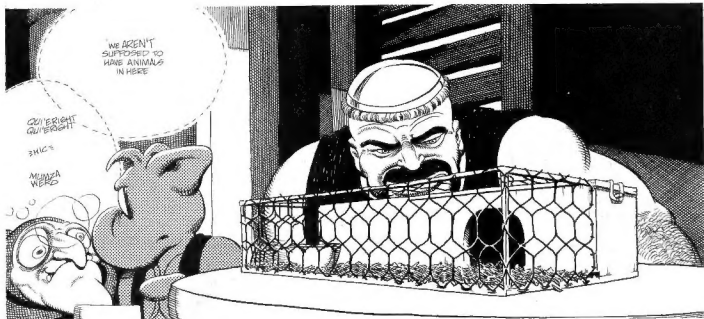
because I find **it** to be
ordered so disists
very arousing.

I NOW YOU DO
THAT'S WHY
I'M JOOST
RUNQUASTIN'.

spoil-
sports.











iz TOOZ 'ave
brooken clear through
th' floorboards an'
HEWKED mamselfs
undaer NEETH'

WHY DO THESE
THINGS ALWAYS
APPEN ON MY
SHIFT?

Yule have to GATE
SLIM wan (not ME, mind you)
to crawl UNdaer the
Pub and dis-ANE-gage
them...

AN' EFF
SNATCHER
COOMS EN EN
TH' MEANTIME?

WOOT EM I
SOPOSEDA
TELL'ER..

4NE2

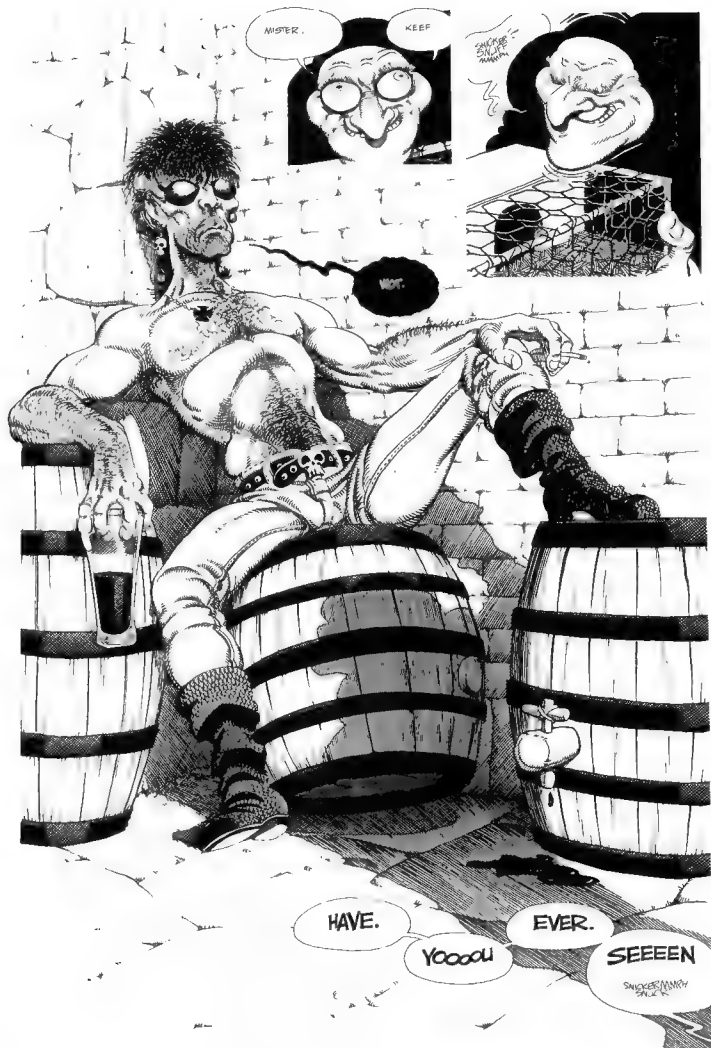
WE COULD PUT A
WATTAYACALL BLISHEL
BASKET OVER IM AN'
YOU COULD TELL'ER
HE'S A WATTAYACALL
FLOOR LAMP



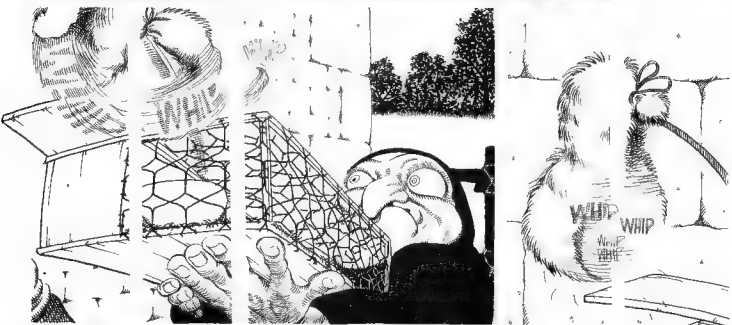
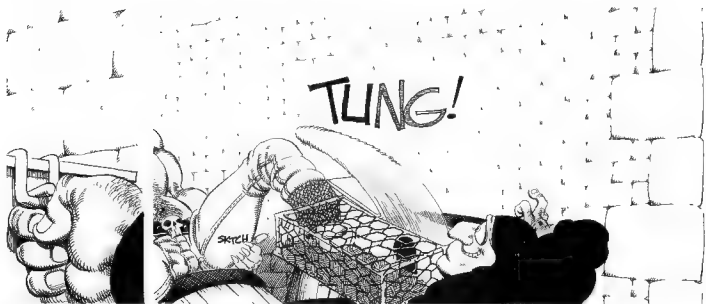
AYE,

THAT
WOULD
WORK



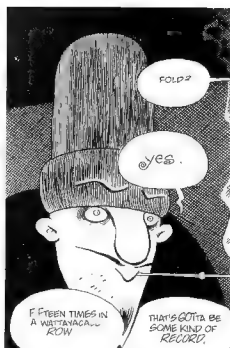
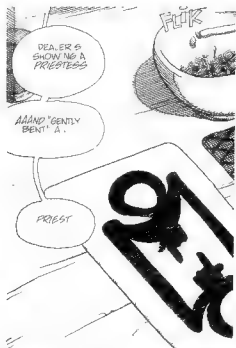


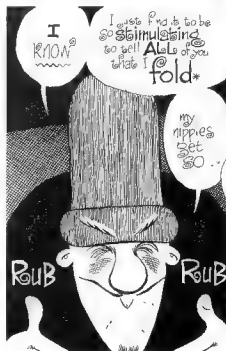
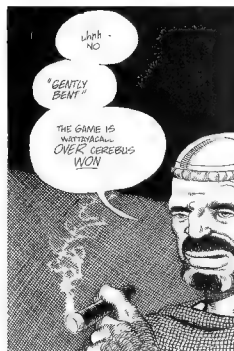
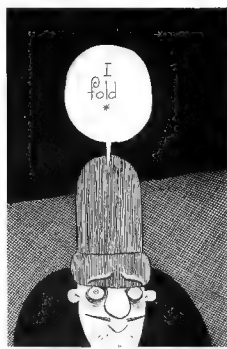
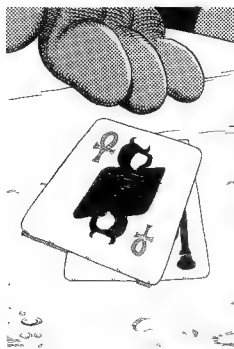












HLIH?

Oh

JUST STICK
'EM BACK IN
THE **LARDER**.

RICE
CAKES.

YECCH



THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

Three letters from two female readers arrived, synchronistically, within a day or so of each other. I was intrigued by the juxtaposition since both were communicating the fact that they had returned to reading Cerebus after a period of exile from the book and had different respective reasons both for leaving and returning. Is it too provocative to say that the reasons, in each case, are idiosyncratically female?

Well, hey, you be the judge:

Dave,

Well, hello. Um, where to start . . . you printed a letter of mine in *Cerebus* #156 where I requested (in my P.S.) for someone to write to me to help my sanity. That was over four years ago. Now it's "update" time . . .

(Are you all sitting down with a drink? I'll wait . . . well, maybe not, I have to get this off my chest.)

First, I want to give my deepest apologies to all my "pen pals" (I like to think of y'all as friends) that I stopped writing to. I realize now (too late?) how rude and unthoughtful that I was. Here's the scoop . . . After that Letter, boy, did I get mail! And to *everyone* who wrote me, *thank you!* I wish I could name them all, but the list would be too long. I wrote back to about 99% of them and became friends with a large percentage of them. Soon after I wrote that letter, I moved (thanks to Uncle Sam's Army) to Panama. And to make a long, dull story short, I got married in September 1993.

Happy ending? *Nope.*

I changed my name to Fisher willingly, but I stopped reading *Cerebus* (around 180) and writing to my friends unwillingly. My husband (a very kind and loving man, but also very jealous) told me to stop writing those freaks and reading that stupid comic. Oh, X-Fools and Superdusfuguy were okay to read (still stupid, but okay), but *Cerebus* and its thought-

provoking stories were (think G. Bush here) "bad," so for my love for him I stopped Cold Turkey.

Then we moved again. This time to Fort Drum, NY. I started picking up comics at a small local store and one day saw *Cerebus*. I picked it up and looked at it longingly, but put it down. To bring it home would upset the husband a bit too much.

In July of 1995, I left the army and we moved to Fort Collins, CO. Again I visited a local comics shop and saw *Cerebus*. Well, the years of temptation were too much for me, so I picked up an issue. Then I picked up *Reads* in softcover. Now I have it put in my hold box every month.

I'm also getting divorced. You see, Dave, I realized I couldn't love someone who wanted to change me, from political views to making me stop reading a "funny book" I liked so very much. A tale which made me laugh, cry, think, and just wonder "huh?" So, reenlist me in the "Legion of Lonely Hearts" again. Hell, make me a General, because I think I'm here to stay.

And once again to all those people I was rude to, go ahead and whip me with a wet noodle, I am sorry.

Thank you, Dave, for lending me your ear for my woeful tale. I wish I had a happy one . . . how 'bout this:

I got my first tattoo a couple weeks ago: a cool-looking ank on my left calf. For my second one, I want *Cerebus*. He's going to be the one constant in my life, so what the heck. I was just wondering, when (not if, but when) I get it, would you like a little © 1996 Dave Sim by it? Wouldn't bother me . . . When I do get him tattooed on, I'll send you a picture, I promise!

I'm still waiting for that poster book of Fave Covers, too!

Thanks, Dave & Gerhard, for the little cute one.

Now a midnight-shift 'asshole,'
Margaret Fisher
1104 Alford St. #4
Ft. Collins, CO 80524

P.S. - It used to be Tucker, now it's Fisher . . .

P.P.S. - To anyone who is interested: 24 (3/4) years old, red hair, blue eyes (yes, two this time), SWF (hope that stands for Single White Female — I never did get those personal ads). Looking for friends to write to, and this time I *will* write back, as long as you write me (and maybe more)!

Thank you, Dave!

Welcome back. I'd really prefer that people not get Cerebus tattoos (or tattoos of any kind), but if you really feel you must, please don't bother with a copyright notice. Of course, if you have a Cerebus tattoo with a copyright notice, don't feel obligated to go and get it burned off with a laser. I wonder if other cartoonists have to concern themselves with this stuff?

I'm going to answer the next letter within the letter itself to save everyone the trouble of backtracking to find out what questions I'm answering. The italics parts are mine:

Dear Dave,

My daughter is at the beach with my in-laws and my husband is in Boston for six weeks (NEH fellowship), so perhaps it makes sense that I've chosen this time to pick up *Cerebus* again. I didn't stop reading (about a year or so ago) because I'm lazy or got too busy or found a better comic (as if there is one) or because my Master's essay took too much time. I stopped because I was mad. I didn't like the idea that I had to be either one of the "exceptions" or one of the empty, soul-sucking, dependent women which comprise the majority (sorry for the gross oversimplification).

This afternoon I stopped at a comics store (*Cosmic Comix* in Ellicott City; I mention the name because the owner [?] was kind enough to offer me a subscription to *Cerebus* alone) and bought all of the recent issues that he had (only three, unfortunately). I had decided to start reading *Cerebus* again, regardless of your views on women. I believe it is possible, and sometimes desirable, to divorce an author's opinion on a certain subject from the rest of the author's thoughts. In order to study Heidegger, for example, we must acknowledge, but somehow

put aside, his anti-Semitism. When reading Aristotle, I must put aside some of his views on women which are obviously false (that the woman contributes only the matter to the fetus while the man contributes the form, e.g.). I do this because Aristotle and Heidegger (among others) are great philosophers and their books contain much truth. (I realize the dilemma in this, perhaps ad hoc, way of reading philosophy. How can I simply declare parts of a work to be true and parts to be false? I am still struggling with this.) (I don't know how you can do otherwise with this. If we are obligated as readers to accept / endorse / hold-to-be-true anything that we read in toto or to likewise dismiss / denounce / hold-to-be-false anything that we read in toto, what can we end up with but a world of literary demagogues and their respective constituencies? I think this was one of the first failures of feminism: to assume that anything that didn't flatter feminist sensibilities was misogynistic until proven otherwise — and in the meantime could be dismissed entirely because someone — anyone — had labeled the work misogynistic.)

I had decided, this afternoon, to do the same with *Cerebus*. That is, *Cerebus* is a great comic (actually, it is a great book) and it is worth reading, regardless of its sometimes misogynistic bent. Then I arrived home and read your answer to a letter in issue #208 in which you state that you are "of two minds" regarding women. That was certainly heartening (and a coincidence, unless you've been saying that a lot lately). Yet I'm glad I made the commitment to re-enter the world of *Cerebus* before reading that letter. It somehow makes my decision more internal. (You misread my observation, I think. If you are reassured, it is because you envision the "two minds" as being in equal balance. Issue 186 contained my best observations about the female gender and where it is at odds with the female gender's perception and / or public portrayal of itself.)

As to your dilemma (if it is even that to you), I have two comments which may be of help. Socrates says (without his famous irony, it seems) that there are three ways of judging a thought: experience, prudence, and argument. What do your experience, prudence, and arguments tell you about women? My second comment has to do with your sharp delineation between rationality and emotions. John Stuart Mill states that any argument has a starting point

which itself cannot be logically proven. It must simply be accepted or not. I would ask you: What is the starting point of your argument and on what grounds do you base it? *(That the female gender's perception and/or portrayal of itself is at odds with the actuality of the female gender. I base it on the perception and portrayal of the female gender imparted to me in conversation or print, what I see in observing women, and where those perceptions are at odds.)*

I'm glad to be back and I'm sorry I missed you last year in Bethesda.

Best wishes,
Dawn

P.S. - I've enclosed a letter I wrote to you four years ago after seeing you in Washington. Do with it what you will.

P.P.S. - Is the "M'Oak" of *Thieves and Kings* the same one who used to write in? If so, congratulations to him! *(Indeed. Second the motion. Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.)*

P.P.P.S - I just realized that I forgot to mention another thing that bothers me. Why are there no female philosophers? (By "philosopher" I don't just mean someone grunting out philosophy textbooks at the local university. I mean the heavy hitters like Plato and Descartes.) I don't know. It seems too easy to simply say that it is due to patriarchal society which has kept women down. How, then, does one explain the many excellent women writers throughout history? (Sappho was rumored to be the best poet of her time.) Socrates (*Republic* again) states that just as some men have a nature which inclines them toward philosophy, so too do some women. But he doesn't say if this will be a more likely occurrence among men than women. Nor does he say if there will be any difference in the degree or kind of philosophizing done by women. He does, however, bring up the fact that women, as a class, are physically weaker than men. One wonders if he means to imply that women philosophers will be somehow weaker than their male counterparts. To explain: the fastest female runner is faster than most every man. But the fastest human being is always a man. Likewise, the "best" female philosopher will be better than most men (Simone de Beauvoir, e.g.), but the best will be a man. I don't like this idea, but I am willing to entertain the notion that it may be true. *(I think until this fact is more widely accepted*

among your gender — being "willing to entertain the notion that it may be true" to me means that you are stuck in the intellectual cul-de-sac of being unable to differentiate between facts and opinions — civilization will remain in its present horse latitudes of erosion and inertia. Let me give an obvious example: the Olympic Games. If women were genuinely interested in / believed that men and women are and/or should be equal, then why are the events divided into male and female competitions? If we are all one flesh in this vale of tears, does it not make more sense for men and women to compete against each other to determine who are the best in the world? Would not the first woman — in non-gender-differentiated competition — to win a bronze medal reinforce gender equality — for the first time — as something other than an ongoing myth / misapprehension? The first woman to win a gold lay to rest once and for all the "lie" that women are not as good as men? Why would women not be actively campaigning for this? Why would women not boycott the Games until they were permitted to compete against men? I dare say because women athletes — the physical "best and the brightest" of your gender — know something to be a fact that female non-athletes persist in viewing as an opinion. I would submit, respectfully, that there is a lesson to be learned for your gender from these female Olympians who exert themselves and dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to their field of endeavour without whining about being oppressed by a patriarchal society, seeking to have rules changed to benefit them at the expense of male athletes. Good sportsmanship (we can all be grateful that the female Olympians don't insist on calling it good sportspersonship) transcends gender. Tonya Harding aside, the best female athletes, like their male counterparts, play to win. If they win, good for them. If they lose, they try harder next time, accepting their defeat with as much grace as possible.) I do not think, however, that this in any way condones such things as denying women education. (Nor do I. If this encapsulates the reasoning behind your gender not accepting the previously enunciated fact — that if you can't implicitly be the best, the best won't allow you to participate — then I think you're about fifty-to-sixty years out of date in your thinking.) (Socrates says that when you don't allow the women in your city to pursue what is

in their nature, you are wasting half of the human resources in your city.) F. Scott Fitzgerald may have been a better writer than Edith Wharton, but that doesn't mean her books shouldn't be read at all.

Sorry for that final postscript. I promise that this is the end.

I'm going to print your subsequent (actually previous) letter without comment. I'm sure the women who read it (and a handful of the men) will understand the dilemma I've presented for you over the last five years — a dilemma which is, I dare say, implicit in being a female Cerebus reader/fan. So, permit me to just supply a bridging observation between your two letters:

Among the many peculiar experiences I've had in my life, I've been able to add attending the commencement ceremonies at the all-female Smith College this past June (congratulations again, Kelly). The keynote speaker was Anna Quindlen, Pulitzer Prize winner and (so far as I know) the first woman to edit the New York Times op-ed page. I found most of what she had to say rhetorically flaccid, myopic, and self-defeating (most particularly her attempt to address the fact that she and others of her kind had come late to the insight that there might be merit in being a housewife and/or mother that they had overlooked in the three decades they had been preoccupied with "nothing short of the feminization of the world"). I did, however, listen carefully to everything that she had to say. When she arrived at the point in her address where she reminded the graduating class that, as they pursue careers, promotions, influence, material possessions, awards, citations, and all manner of accomplishments, "it is not enough to do 'well,' you must also do 'good.'" I joined enthusiastically in the collective applause. From a half-hour address that I had judged to be wrong-headed, uninspiring, contradictory, anti-male, and largely deceitful, I took away one gem that made enduring the rest of it worthwhile.

Anyway, a belated "welcome back."

Dear Dave,

Of course I've been intending to write you for some time but have never quite gotten around to it. After re-reading *Cerebus* #94 (which I use as a sort of ethical Stanford-Binet on all possible new beaux — "Do you think she was raped? Why?") and again after reading M'Oak's letter of lust, my word processor was nearly turning itself on for me. "Please use me," it whimpered, "write anything." I knew it had only my best interests in mind, but I still couldn't bring myself to commit these jumbled thoughts and impressions to the near-immortality of the written word.

Thank you, then, for providing me with the impetus to break this self-defeating rut of silence that I have been in for the past year.

Seeing and talking with you several Sundays ago in Washington was quite wonderful (and I hope that another year will not go by before I do so again). I was vividly reminded of my first impressions of you gained last year in Oshawa. When I first announced my intention to drive to Canada in order to see you, my beau at the time was not too wild about the idea (he was jealous, although he wouldn't admit it). Fortunately I left him behind and took a friend who knew someone in Toronto that we could stay with. This allowed me to venture alone to the signing in Oshawa while my friend hung out in Toronto. Never having been to a signing (largely due to the fact that I collect no other comic books), I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I arrived some 15 or 20 minutes early to check out the scene. As nothing seemed to be happening, I began browsing through back issues amidst some obvious glances of surprise ("woman" and "comic-book store" don't seem to go together in most people's minds). After receiving a phone call, the owner (who, by the way, was very polite and helpful in giving me directions to his shop) announced that you would be late and, in fact, needed a ride from a local hotel. My arm twitched in an effort to volunteer myself, but some useless code of dignity and half-assed attitude of bemused detachment prevented me. An eager young man was dispatched, and the shop took on an air of relaxed watchfulness. At last, someone floated a casual comment in my direction and I began a conversation with a red-headed gentleman (whose name I have inexcusably forgotten). After correcting my pronunciation of "Quebec" (Americans can hide their nationality nowhere, presumably), he proceeded to tell me that he liked *Cerebus* but

didn't care for the large amount of letters in each issue. At his comments I became somewhat disappointed, for I had expected that anyone who would come to a signing would be a "true fan" of *Cerebus*. By this I mean loving every part of it and receiving it with as much joyful expectation as I do. My eyes were opened (as they were again in Washington). Happily, my musings were cut short at the appearance of a young man who had stationed himself outside of the front door. "He's here," he said in a voice strangely conveying the attributes of both a shout and a whisper. My head, along with everyone else's in the shop, instantly swiveled to the door. You and the owner entered and walked behind the counter. Because of your reputation, I had expected you to be cocky, walk with a swagger, and survey us "fans" with an even stronger bemused detachment than I myself had been trying to feign earlier. Instead you stood uncertainly behind the counter and glanced around shyly, if at all. The owner provided you with a pen, and we all lined up to visit with you individually. At this, you seemed to loosen up and, perhaps, to fall into a familiar groove. My turn came all too quickly — I was enjoying simply observing you as you politely greeted each person — and I presented two issues to you (#119 and #75). I told you of my enjoyment of *Jaka's Story*, and you spoke of the criticisms you had received towards it. As I moved to the door, you said, "I hope you'll be around for #300." "Of course I will!" I wanted to shout. But instead I simply said "certainly" or something equally weak. I wanted to stay in the shop and watch, but I felt this would have made me look like someone obsessed, with no life of my own. So I drove straight back to Toronto. No sooner had I driven onto the Queen's Way (what a cute name for an interstate) than I noticed I was crying. At the time, I had no idea as to the cause but simply scolded myself for being too emotional. Looking back, I surmise that it must have been a sort of post-partum depression (I experienced a similar, though more pronounced and drawn-out, reaction when I finished my undergrad thesis).

So, it's almost exactly a year later and I am again driving alone to see you. This time, the

drive is shorter (only 45 minutes from Annapolis to Washington) and boyfriends have changed. (My current beau has a previous engagement, or he would have joined me. It's just as well, as I enjoy the solitude.) I enter a much different scene. It's a conference room in a hotel, and dealers line the walls, displaying their wares. I immediately spot you, surrounded by a long line. Instead of immediately joining it, I decide to locate a copy of the first "phone book," which I do, and purchase it. Now, having surveyed my surroundings adequately, I join the line and peruse the original artwork which is laid out on long tables. Several times I attempt to join in the conversation behind me. However, these men are not receptive to my advances. They are collectors — one of them produces an original #1, and the other proclaims *Jaka's Story* as too artsy-fartsy — and have, perhaps, labeled me as a simple-minded girl with no information useful to their dealings. I return to my silent musings without regret. Finally, I am at the head of the table. You look up, Dave, and say, "I know when to take a break," and proceed to light a cigarette. I smile. You seem so much more at ease, so much more in control of the situation. In the course of our conversation, two very pleasant things occur. First, the guy behind me, who had recently ignored my attempts at polite conversation, tries to interrupt you and me. (Only, I presume, in an effort to talk to you.) You cut him off without hesitation. (Thanks.) Second, you say that you remember meeting me. I am quite happy but merely laugh as you remember that the shop was discussing the appearance of a woman unknown to them. I present #141 to Gerhard (a truly beautiful cover) and again walk directly out the door. Fortunately, this time there is a chair, so I sit down and light a Silk Cut. It is only then that I read what you have written; "Write me a nice letter and I'll send you one of my 51's." Could I have been any happier at that moment?

Reading over this letter, I find that it is a bit lengthy and perhaps unsuitable for printing. I am not terribly concerned by this. Rather, I do hope that you read and somewhat enjoy my account. It has certainly been pleasant for me to relive these memories. Even now I am smiling.

DAVE SIM
GERHARD
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of Our
MINDS"

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February 8th

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